

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6332

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 08788

CINCPAD FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, RP

SUBJECT: MALAYSIAN-INDONESIAN PEACE PROPOSAL FOR MINDANAO

1. SUMMARY: LOCAL PRESS HAS REACTED POSITIVELY TO REPORT THAT INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA HAVE PROPOSAL TO RESTART NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN MNLF AND PHILIPPINES. THOUGH DETAILS OF PLAN, WORKED OUT AT MEETING BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER ONN AND PRESIDENT SUHARTO, HAVE NOT BEEN REVEALED, BOTH PRESIDENT MARCOS AND DEFENSE SECRETARY ENRILE HAVE WELCOMED INITIATIVE. IN A RECENT STATEMENT, MARCOS REITERATED PUBLIC GOP POLICY THAT IT IS WILLING TO MEET WITH MNLF TO SOLVE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINE CONFLICT. MARCOS IS BEING DISINGENUOUS, HOWEVER, AND OVERSTATING GOP DESIRE TO NEGOTIATE; GOP IGNORED MNLF PROPOSAL IN EARLY APRIL TO

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REACTIVATE NEGOTIATIONS. MNLF PROPOSAL REQUIRED, INTER ALIA, CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES AND PARTICIPATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE IN NEGOTIATIONS. SUHARTO-ONN PROPOSAL PROBABLY APPEALS TO GOP BECAUSE IT MAY PRESENT OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE AND LIBYAN PARTICIPATION IN TALKS. GOP BELIEVES THIS HAS ONLY COMPLICATED THEIR PROBLEM AND PROLONGED THE CONFLICT. MNLF, ON OTHER HAND,

WILL PROBABLY BE UNWILLING TO GO TO CONFERENCE TABLE WITHOUT ISLAMIC CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION. END SUMMARY.

2. LOCAL "GUIDED" PRESS GAVE SUBSTANTIAL NEWS COVERAGE AND POSITIVE EDITORIAL COMMENT TO REPORTED DESIRE BY MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER HUSSEN ONN AND INDONESIAN PRESIDENT SUHARTO TO ASSIST IN PEACEFULLY SOLVING MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. MEETING IN LABUAN, MALAYSIA, MAY 18, THE TWO ASEAN LEADERS REPORTEDLY HAVE PLANNED A JOINT APPROACH TO THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT (GOP) AND THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) TO PERSUADE THEM TO BRING THEIR DISPUTE TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE ONCE AGAIN. DETAILS OF THE PLAN HAVE NOT BEEN REVEALED. THE TWO LEADERS ALSO CALLED FOR THE REVITALIZATION OF THE FOUR-NATION ISLAMIC CONFERENCE COMMISSION COMPOSED OF SAUDI ARABIA, SOMALIA, SENEGAL AND LIBYA THAT HAD BEEN SUPERVISING THE ABORTIVE CEASEFIRE IN WESTERN MINDANAO AND THE SULU ARCHIPELAGO; DURING THE LAST SIX MONTHS THE COMMISSION HAS CEASED TO FUNCTION ACTIVELY.

3. NEWS OF THE PROPOSED ONN-SUHARTO INITIATIVE PROVOKED POSITIVE RESPONSES FROM BOTH PRESIDENT MARCOS AND SECRETARY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE ENRILE. ENRILE IS QUOTED IN THE "BULLETIN TODAY" MAY 21 AS SAYING "THE OFFER OF INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA IS WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF ASEAN WHICH HOLDS THAT ANY PROBLEM ARISING IN THE REGION MUST BE SOLVED BY CONFIDENTIAL

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THE COUNTRY IN THE REGION WITH THE OTHER ASEAN MEMBER NATIONS ASSISTING." SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AT MANILA AIRPORT PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF THE NEPALESE KING MAY 21 PRESIDENT MARCOS EXPRESSED THE READINESS OF THE GOP TO MEET WITH "DULY AUTHORIZED LEADERS" OF THE MNLF. MARCOS STATED THAT SEARCH FOR PEACE IN THE SOUTH HAS BEEN MADE MORE DIFFICULT BY THE RIVALRY BETWEEN HASHIM SALAMAT AND NUR MISUARI FOR LEADERSHIP OF THE MNLF; THE GOP DOES NOT KNOW WITH WHOM TO NEGOTIATE, HE COMPLAINED. MARCOS REITERATED THE GOP HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY ASKING THE MNLF TO "SIT DOWN WITH US."

4. COMMENT: MARCOS WAS BEING SOMEWHAT DISINGENUOUS WHEN HE RESTATED THE GOP'S PUBLIC POLICY TOWARD NEGOTIATIONS, OVERSTATING GOP DESIRE TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS AND IMPLYING THAT GOP IMPOSES NO CONDITIONS ON FUTURE TALKS WITH THE MNLF. THE ONN-SUHARTO INITIATIVE IS THE SECOND PROPOSAL FOR NEGOTIATIONS IN RECENT MONTHS; THE FIRST CAME FROM THE MNLF IN EARLY APRIL. THAT PROPOSAL, WHICH RECEIVED NO LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE BUT WAS CONFIRMED BY UNDERSECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS COLLANTES IN CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE APRIL 15, WAS CONDITIONAL, REQUIRING THAT NEW NEGOTIATIONS

A) BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TRIPOLI AGREEMENT OF 1976 (WHICH SPECIFIED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MUSLIM AUTONOMOUS REGION AND A CEASEFIRE); B) BE HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE; C) THAT THE MEETING BE HELD OUTSIDE OF THE PHILIPPINES; AND D) THAT ALL MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST THE MNLF BE HALTED. EFFECT WOULD BE A RETURN TO STATUS QUO ANTE OF EARLY 1977 AT WHICH TIME CEASEFIRE WAS EFFECTIVE AND THE TWO SIDES WERE STILL NEGOTIATING. DURING CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE, COLLANTES CHARACTERIZED THESE CONDITIONS AS "OUTRAGEOUS" AND

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INDICATED THE GOP WAS IN NO HURRY TO RUSH BACK TO NEGOTIATING TABLE. COLLANTES PREDICTED THAT SOUTHERN PHILIPPINE CONFLICT WOULD NOT BE PRIORITY ISSUE AT ISLAMIC CONFERENCE AND IMPLIED THEREFORE THE GOP FELT NO COMPULSION TO SEEK EARLY NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.

5. THE GOP'S POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE ONN-SUHARTO PROPOSAL APPEARS DUE PRIMARILY TO ITS DESIRE TO EXTRICATE ITSELF FROM ITS ENTANGLEMENT WITH LIBYA AND THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE, WHICH RESULTED FROM ITS FIRST ATTEMPT TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE MNLF IN 1976. SINCE THE FAILURE OF THAT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS AND THE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE MNLF BY LIBYA, THE GOP HAS EMPHASIZED THE DOMESTIC

NATURE OF THE CONFLICT AND THAT THE CONFLICT SHOULD BE SETTLED BY MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN FILIPINOS WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE. AWARE THAT SOME OUTSIDE INVOLVEMENT IS PROBABLY NECESSARY, THE GOP CERTAINLY WOULD PREFER CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSISTANCE FROM ITS TWO RELATIVELY CONSERVATIVE ASEAN NEIGHBORS, INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA, THAN FROM THE RADICAL AND ERRATIC LIBYANS. BOTH ASEAN COUNTRIES APPEAR TO HAVE PLAYED A ROLE IN MODERATING LIBYAN ATTEMPTS AT THE RECENT ISLAMIC CONFERENCE IN DAKAR TO PRESS FOR INCREASED SUPPORT FOR THE MNLF BY ISLAMIC COUNTRIES.

6. IN THE PAST THE GOP HAS INSISTED THAT ANY FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MNLF MUST BE HELD IN MANILA, WHERE THE LAST TALKS BROKE OFF IN EARLY 1977. IT NOW APPEARS TO HAVE RELENED ON THIS POINT AND IS WILLING TO ACCEPT A NEUTRAL VENUE LIKE KUALA LUMPUR OR JAKARTA. THE POINT ON WHICH THE PROPOSAL MIGHT FOUNDER, HOWEVER, IS THE QUESTION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION. THE MNLF APPEARS TO BE UNWILLING TO COMPROMISE ON THIS POINT, OBVIOUSLY FEELING THE NEED TO HAVE A POWERFUL SUPPORTER TO PROVIDE LEVERAGE AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE SHOULD THE GOP BECOME INTRANSIGENT. THE GOP, ON THE OTHER HAND, BELIEVES THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE IC HAS SERVED TO PROLONG AND COMPLICATE THE CONFLICT.

7. ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ISLAMIC AFFAIRS AND AMBASSADOR TO SAUDI ARABIA PANGANDAMAN TOLD EMBOFF MAY 24 THAT GOP HAD AS YET RECEIVED NO COMMUNICATIONS FROM EITHER MALAYSIANS OR INDONESIANS REGARDING PROPOSAL. TOUSSAINT

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Message Attributes

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